

# JOURNAL

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## Society for Psychical Research

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1949

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# JOURNAL

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VOLUME XXXV No. 654 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1949



## EDITORIAL NOTE

THIS *Journal* is now in its sixty-fifth year of publication. Under the editorship of Sir William Barrett, F.R.S., it made its first appearance in 1884, two years after the foundation of the S.P.R. Up to the present time its circulation, apart from a few special numbers, has been restricted to members of the Society. From now on it will be available to the public.

In deciding to make this change, the Council have been largely influenced by the steady growth of public interest in psychical research which has taken place in recent years, and by the need to provide as much reliable information on the subject as possible. It is not surprising that there has grown up, in this relatively uncharted field, a body of literature more notable for quantity than for quality. Indeed, many people whose first acquaintance with the subject of allegedly paranormal phenomena is by means of the more tendentious works must often be discouraged from further inquiry. The problems encountered in psychical research will only be surmounted if they are approached, in the words of the founders of the Society, 'without prejudice or prepossession of any kind, and in the same spirit of exact and unimpassioned inquiry which has enabled Science to solve so many problems, once not less obscure nor less hotly debated'.

It is hoped that this *Journal* may serve as an introduction to psychical research conducted in a scientific manner, and that among its new readers will be many who will in due course play a more active part in furthering the Society's objects.

## SOME PROXY SITTINGS

## A PRELIMINARY ATTEMPT AT OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT

BY D. J. WEST, M.B., CH.B.

DURING the years 1946-1948 a series of sittings with mediums was carried out under proxy conditions. The link between sitter and medium was established by means of a small article belonging to the sitter which the medium was allowed to handle. Except on three occasions, as indicated in Table II, the notetaker present at each sitting did not know to whom the articles belonged. The sitter was not present in person. The mediums chosen for the experiments were all recommended by members of the Society, and all of them were willing to work for absent sitters.

The purpose of the experiments was to seek evidence of paranormal faculty obtained under circumstances in which allowance need not be made for normal deductions from the appearance, conversation, and reactions of the sitter. While no paranormal effect was detected in these experiments (for which reason they are reported here only in summary form),<sup>1</sup> they have served to demonstrate the need for an objective appraisal of mediumistic material. This is a matter which has not been fully recognised in the past, and needs to be acknowledged now if in future good use is to be made of gifted mediums.

The failure to secure positive results could be due to a great many causes besides lack of genuinely paranormal faculty in the mediums. It is not known what are the essential conditions for bringing about the necessary *rapport* between sitter and medium at a proxy séance. For example, one does not know whether it matters if the sitter is unaware who is going to act as medium or what time the sitting is being held. The principle followed in this investigation was to adhere to whatever conditions each of the mediums believed to be advantageous. Had time permitted, experiments carried out under systematically varied conditions would have been preferable.

The possibility that the negative results might be due to an unsympathetic element in the personality of the experimenter seems unlikely, for in every sitting the only person present with the medium was the notetaker, and about half the notetakers used were persons who believed themselves to be in the habit of obtaining successful results with mediums. These notetakers were as consistently unsuccessful as the others. The persons chosen to act as absent sitters all believed in the possibility of obtaining

<sup>1</sup> A detailed report and discussion can be consulted in the Society's files.



paranormal results and most of them considered themselves 'good' sitters.

From the beginning of the experiments it was decided to employ an objective method of assessment to control the factor of chance and so avoid the differences of opinion over the role of coincidence which inevitably arise when material is presented and judged in qualitative form only. This control procedure was an adjunct; it was not exercised on the medium, it did not affect the conduct of the sittings, and it only entered the investigation afterwards when the absent sitters or 'annotators' assessed for correctness the material given by the medium.

Some objective assessment was made all the more necessary in this investigation by the sort of material obtained. Many of the statements made by the mediums were vague or general in character and cloaked in ambiguous phraseology, so that they might reasonably be expected to have some reference to almost everyone. Consider the following example:

(1) I feel pressed down and cluttered up with books and material—books of every description. (2) I do not feel able to fight my way clear of these conditions which bind me down here. I want to go to a woman. I see a woman's arm trying to clear this out of the way. She seems to be trying to clear her life of so many obstacles that are surrounding her. (3) Repression is strong on this letter. (4) I do not feel this is a very old woman; she is fairly young. (5) I get a strong connection with France. If she has not been there in the past there is a visit there in the future. I hear much French being spoken with this; many excited people speaking French. (6) This person is—or has been in the past—very fond of gaiety, dancing, etc. But this seems to have passed into the past. I am pressed down with conditions I just do not like. (7) A man is interested in this person. I get an elderly man on this letter. Whether she has been seeing him a lot I do not know but there is in the future a move being made in a better direction. Altogether better circumstances of living will come to her.

Confronted with a set of impressions of this nature, it is difficult for most annotators to arrive by qualitative judgment at a decision as to whether the reading really has any more particularly personal reference to themselves than to anyone else.

In the present experiments, two distinct methods of assessment were used. In the first place, readings obtained in connection with five articles (or in some cases three) were grouped together and sent to all the absent sitters, who were asked to annotate the items in all five readings and to say which one of the five was most applicable to themselves. Great care was taken to ensure that there were no normal clues which might help the annotator to pick

out his own reading—he was not, of course, told which was his own. If there were an appreciable paranormal element in the material, one would expect that annotators would tend to pick out their own readings more often than chance would predict. The following table giving the results for the twelve mediums who were tested by this method shows that no such effect was observed.

TABLE I

<i>Name of Medium</i>	<i>No. of sittings</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>No. of Psychometry readings annotated</i>	<i>No. of annotators who chose their own reading as the one most applicable</i>	<i>No. of annotators expected by chance to choose their own readings</i>
J. MAYES - -	10	Nov. 1946– April 1947	42	10	$9\frac{3}{8}$
MRS METHVEN -	3	April 1947	9	2	3
MISS X - -	2	Feb.–March 1947	8	1	2
OTTO REIMANN -	3	April–May 1947	8	3	$2\frac{3}{8}$
MRS GARRETT -	1	March 1948	4	1	$\frac{4}{8}$
OTHERS (7) -	8	May 1947– Jan. 1948	26	8	$8\frac{3}{8}$
TOTAL - -	27		97	25	26.7

Although the procedure in these experiments would have revealed any regular and strong paranormal effect, it was felt that from the statistical point of view it was crude. A small and intermittent effect might have escaped detection, since each reading had to be accepted or rejected as a whole by the annotator, and a reading contains a number of items, some of which may be correct and some incorrect. What was desired was clearly a method whereby the annotator could make one choice for each item, instead of one choice for each group of fifteen items or so. The difficulty with this procedure, however, is that, even if the medium's statements from a single reading are not presented for annotation in one group but are mixed in with the other statements to be annotated, the items from a single reading might be interdependent—for example, a single train of thought might run through all of them. It is hard to say just how far this interdependence normally occurs, but it is clear that if it were very strong the annotator would be able to group together all the items of one reading and infer that they were *all* either intended for him or not. In this case he would, again, be making one decision per reading, and not per item, and it would be a serious error to regard his judgments as



dependent for each item. This interdependence effect is therefore important, and must be reduced to a minimum if any attempt is made to evaluate the separate items of a reading.

The method used in this investigation was to combine in a single item all statements of one general type from one reading. Thus, one item would contain all the statements from the reading which were concerned with health, another with names and initials, another with events, and so on. In this way it was hoped that any interdependence effect between different items would be very small. For this procedure a new control method had to be adopted. Each item given by the medium was paired with a control item of the same general type and the annotator was asked to choose his item from the pair. The control item was picked by the experimenter from a catalogue<sup>1</sup> of statements given previously by mediums, in such a way as to make the pair of items as nearly as possible equally matched. It was recognised that this introduced an undesirable element of subjectivity into the procedure, since the validity of the results depended to some extent on the experimenter's ability to choose equally matched pairs.

Six mediums were tested by this method in fifteen sittings. The results, which were quite negative, are given in the following table :

TABLE II

<i>Name of Medium</i>	<i>No. of sittings</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>No. of readings</i>	<i>No. of items chosen correctly</i>	<i>No. of items expected to be chosen correctly</i>
MRS WERTH -	postal expts.	Feb. 1948	6	17	20½
W. KEELER -	2*	Feb. 1948	2	5	4
MRS HARRISON -	1*	Feb. 1948	1	3	3½
MRS PLEVINS -	1	Feb. 1948	1	0	½
MRS DAW -	2	Jan. 1948	2	4	6
R. CORKERSELL -	postal expts.†	Dec. 1947	3	5	4.6
TOTAL - -			15	34	39.1

\* In these three sittings the notetaker knew the owners of the psychometry articles.

† In these sittings the annotators were asked to pick each of their own items from among two other control items.

The result is disappointing, admittedly, but it must be taken into consideration that there were no mediums of the outstanding

<sup>1</sup> This catalogue was prepared by Mr M. T. Hindson, a member of the Society who has helped me in many pieces of work.

quality of Mrs Leonard or Mrs Piper available for the tests. Experienced investigators have long recognised that positive results in psychical experiments are not to be obtained without great effort and many failures, and the negative results of one series or one experimenter should not discourage further attempts.

Some subsidiary observations seem worthy of mention for the light they throw on the problems involved in the evaluation of mediumistic material.

The problem of bias in annotation is particularly important. It was observed from the beginning that certain annotators seemed to be biased in their judgement. One lady, for example, said 'no' to the statement 'strong clerical associations' although her father is a clergyman and she has lived with him almost all her life. Some persons tended to pick on one reading which they believed to be their own and to score it out of all proportion to the rest. They did not, however, pick out the right reading any more often than would be expected by chance. This observation was tested with three of the most biased annotators by preparing three pseudo-readings from statements taken at random from sittings which had no connection with the three annotators. These three artificial readings produced just the same reaction as the real ones. (Thus, one of the annotators, picking up one of the readings, wrote '[this reading] is very good indeed. I am absolutely sure it is meant for me'). It seems clear, therefore, that the bias effect is genuine and has nothing to do with the medium, but is associated with the annotator. This lack of objectivity in judging mediumistic material is a serious obstacle in the way of any attempt to assess reliably a medium's ability.

It was found that the strongly biased annotators, when attending an ordinary sitting, gained a very much more favourable impression of the medium's powers than did more critical sitters. Where some of those who, according to their own accounts, get the best results with mediums, are equally enthusiastic about a pseudo-reading prepared by random methods, then it becomes clear that the explanation is to be found in the psychology of those particular annotators. Though this latter experiment was performed on a very small scale, it lends support to the view that the personal judgment of the sitter should be regarded with reserve.

Another interesting observation was the effect of the nature of the psychometric article on the medium. It was found that some mediums, consciously or unconsciously, would make statements which seemed to be suggested by the nature of the article. Where this happens, not only does the article provide a clue to the medium



to help him make correct statements about its owner by a process of rational inference, but also it helps the annotator to infer which reading is intended for him, by comparing the character of the reading with the nature of the article he has submitted. This latter possibility was noticed by one of the annotators in Sitting VI, who used it to show the experimenter the fallibility of his method by not only picking out his own reading, but also by inferring roughly the nature of the articles which had elicited the other four readings. From this point onwards the experimenter took pains either to remove such clues before sending the readings for annotation or to use non-committal articles or identical sets of articles.

The whole question of the proper conduct of a proxy sitting and the objective evaluation of the material obtained has recently been discussed at some length in an excellent paper by Pratt and Birge in the *Journal of Parapsychology*. The importance of having a valid and statistically sensitive method in readiness for use with mediums of the future cannot, in my view, be too greatly stressed.

## SOME RECENT EXPERIMENTS IN HYPNOTISM

BY IAN FLETCHER, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.

*It may not be generally realised that the first organised investigation of hypnotism on scientific lines was carried out by the Society. The early volumes of Proceedings contain reports of the committee set up for this purpose shortly after the foundation of the Society in 1882, as well as articles on the subject by Edmund Gurney and F. W. H. Myers.*

*In later years the lead in research into hypnotism passed to workers in the United States, where its use by the medical profession is steadily increasing. There have lately been signs of a revival of interest in its therapeutic possibilities in this country.*

*The following is a slightly abbreviated version of a paper read at a meeting of the Society on 30 August 1949.—ED.*

WHAT is hypnotism? Although it has been practised, in one form or another, for many hundreds of years, we still cannot give a final answer to this question. We are probably nearer the truth now, but there is still a great deal of research to be done, and when it is completed it will no doubt help us in solving many of the other problems of psychical research.

Let me say a few words on what we already know about hypnotism. It is a state of mind which is produced in the subject by the suggestions of the hypnotist. Various stages or depths of hypnosis have been described, but they have not received universal acceptance. Let it suffice to say that there is a light and a deep state, with possibly an intermediate one. It is not *necessary* for a subject to pass through these stages before becoming deeply hypnotised, but it is usual for a new subject experiencing the phenomenon for the first time. However, on subsequent occasions the deep stage may be reached instantaneously. I have a recording of the brain impulses of one of my subjects, produced on a machine known as the electro-encephalogram (E.E.G.), and hypnosis is seen to occur in one fifth of a second. This may sound astonishing; indeed it is, but I and many others have produced the phenomenon repeatedly, and occasionally at first attempts at hypnosis with a new subject. You might even be sceptical that such a rapid state of hypnosis can occur. Let me remind you of the more common condition of fainting. Many people faint quite suddenly at the sight of blood. The similarity between this kind of faint and hypnosis is that both are brought about by suggestion.

We all know that under normal circumstances the average individual can and does inhibit many external stimuli when concentrating on something else. The striking of a clock is often not heard; the entry or exit of a person not noticed; the sensation of pain inhibited during a game of football. I have often noticed in hospital, particularly with children, that a patient who has pain will very quickly 'forget' it if he is engaged in some interesting conversation. (That is one reason why pain is far more noticeable at night; the patient has nothing to occupy his mind). I shall later give some examples of how, under hypnosis, all normal physiological conditions may be either inhibited or enhanced.

In all forms of research it is essential to be satisfied that the phenomena exist before attempting to explain them. So with hypnotism I have attempted to reproduce many of the phenomena claimed by hypnotists past and present.

The first experiment—and the most useful—was to give the subject the post-hypnotic suggestion that he would immediately go into a hypnotic state when I took my pen from my pocket. (I use various signals, such as lighting a cigarette lighter, snapping my fingers or tapping my foot on the floor. A different one is used for each subject if I am working with three or four at a time). The effect is instantaneous. I have also found that if the subject is told in his waking state that the signal will not affect him, he remains awake. If I then say it will work, he sleeps.



I will now give a few examples of the effects of hypnosis on the different senses.

#### SENSATION

It is sometimes possible to produce anaesthesia and hyperaesthesia in a subject without his ever having been hypnotised. I had one such subject, and all that was necessary was for me to look at him and count five, having previously told him his arm would become quite dead. I then stuck a thick surgical needle into his arm and another person present touched him two or three times with a lighted cigarette. Small blisters were produced, but the subject felt no pain.

I suggested to the same subject that the whole of his leg was numb and then squeezed his Achilles tendon, which is normally a very painful procedure and is a test of deep muscle sensation as opposed to skin sensation. He felt no pain. Both these experiments have been repeated on other subjects with the same results.

Another subject, whom I hypnotised at Christmas and who had complained of feeling cold, was told she would feel quite hot on waking. A few minutes later she remarked to her friend that it was quite warm and then she removed her scarf, gloves, and coat. I then told her, while she was awake, that she was back to her normal temperature—a necessary precaution in case she went home and put her summer clothes on!

Whilst under hypnosis another subject was told that I was going to touch him with a very hot object. A few minutes later I touched him with my pen and there was a marked withdrawal reflex. I then held his arm and touched him again. This time he shouted and complained that I was burning him. When awakened he had no recollection of what I had done, but a few minutes later he rubbed his arm and said it was painful. As soon as he was told the pain had gone he remarked that his arm felt quite normal. No signs of redness or blistering occurred.

The experiment was repeated with another subject and a faint red line appeared where I had touched him. I then drew a small pattern on his wrist and after a few seconds it could just be seen as a very faint red outline. I am still not convinced of the genuineness of this phenomenon, as pressure might have caused the red mark. I tried a control experiment on the other arm but did not get any response. However, I shall not be convinced until a more definite result is obtained.

One of my patients had to have a form of electrical treatment, known as Galvanism, on his hand. He could only tolerate twenty-five units. (Incidentally, I could not take more on my own hand

as it is quite painful when the current is turned up). Under hypnosis he took eighty units, although this was much stronger than was required for the treatment. I then told him that every time he had his treatment his hand would go completely numb as soon as the terminal touched it. He, of course, would remain awake. This took place in Derby and lasted until treatment ceased about six weeks later. I had returned to London long before. I saw the subject again last week and he confirmed that the anaesthesia remained effective throughout.

#### TASTE AND SMELL

Various subjects, at different times, were given a few drops of quassia—an extremely foul-tasting substance. One was told it was pineapple juice, another that it was pear juice, and another that it was strawberries, and one subject was told he was eating cherries. They all liked it and some asked for more! The one who thought he was eating cherries spat imaginary stones into his hand. Each one was told that on waking he would be given some more of the substance and that it would still taste of the suggested juice. They were then told it tasted normal and the look on their faces left no doubt in my mind that they were actually tasting quassia. Just as quickly I changed the taste back to the suggested one.

I gave one subject the post-hypnotic suggestion to eat a tablet of salt which would taste like a strawberry. At the appointed time he said he had a strong desire to eat something from the bottle containing the salt tablets, but that he knew quite well there was nothing but salt in it. However, he took one, rather hesitatingly, and confessed it did not taste of salt. It was quite pleasant, but he could not say what it tasted of and when I suggested strawberry he denied it.

I was having dinner with the above subject, and by taking my pencil from my pocket put him instantly to sleep. I then told him that the water was very good beer and woke him up. Without saying anything, I casually poured him out a glass of water and poured one for myself. He drank three glasses and then said to me, 'I know it is water but it tastes of very good beer'. I had made no suggestion that it would *look* like beer. I learned later that I had overstepped the mark, because for the next three days all the water he drank tasted of beer!

Another subject was told that very strong ammonia (880) smelt of carnations. He agreed, until the bottle was brought quite close to his nose; then he suddenly smelt the ammonia. I removed the bottle and said the smell of carnations was back again and he agreed. This also worked as a post-hypnotic suggestion.



On another occasion one of my subjects, while in the normal state, was about to pour out a glass of beer. I told him it was ammonia, and he sniffed it, recoiling immediately. I then 'turned' it into champagne. Only *he* had the benefit of it, though.

#### HEARING

A hypnotised subject was told he could only hear my voice. Other people spoke to him but there was no response. A sudden bang was made behind his head which made him jump. When I asked him why he jumped he said he was unaware of the fact and that he had heard no noise.

The same subject took part in the next experiment, in which he was connected to the electro-encephalogram. He was again told he would hear nothing but my voice and again a bang was made. The E.E.G. record showed that he had heard it. I then went out of sight (although he had his eyes closed) and he was told by an observer to wake up. Nothing happened. He was then told that I was ill and had sent word that he was to wake up. Still no response. He was then told I was dead and that he had to wake up. At this stage the record showed signs of agitation, particularly when my name was mentioned, but he did not show any outward signs. I then whispered, very softly, 'wake up' and he immediately awoke, having no recollection of what had happened. It is interesting to note that he recognised my whispered voice. I again hypnotised him and several people whispered 'wake up' but he still responded only to my voice.

Whilst under hypnosis and still connected to the E.E.G. machine, I told him his arm was anaesthetised and then stuck a needle deeply into the flesh. He made no response and there was no flicker in the tracing. When I repeated the experiment without suggesting anaesthesia, the deflection made by the needle of the machine upset the record for several seconds.

Another interesting phenomenon seen on the E.E.G. record when the subject was deeply hypnotised was a peculiar series of waves known as a K-complex. This only occurs during deep natural sleep, and is not easy to obtain owing to the difficulty of getting a person to sleep with this apparatus connected to his head. Not all hypnotic subjects show this phenomenon.

#### SIGHT

Hypnotic experiments on this sense are most interesting, but phenomena do not occur with all subjects. Indeed, many of the

above results are not produced with every person who is hypnotised.

Negative effects are said to be a little more difficult to produce than positive, so I began with the negative.

My subject was told that when he awoke he would not see me, although I would be sitting on a chair in front of him. When he woke up he obviously did see me, and quite clearly too. I then hypnotised him again and told him he would see me quite clearly sitting on the chair. I then gave him a number of twelve figures to remember and stood behind him and woke him up. He said he could remember the number quite clearly and reached across to take my pencil out of my pocket, only to find that I was not in the chair where he could see me. He looked around and saw me standing behind him and asked how I had got there so quickly.

Again I put him out and told him he would not see me or hear me if I spoke. I also told him to ask the other people present where I was. I woke him up and he began telling the others some of the other effects I had produced on previous occasions. He then asked where I was, and said he would ask me to do some other experiments when I returned. I spoke to the others but he ignored me. Somebody threw a glass to me, which I caught, and he was horrified. I then picked up an object and put it on the table. He saw the object move but could not see me. He actually thought that the object was a post-hypnotic vision until I handed it to him. He could not understand it at all. I then told him to wake up when I counted five and said that he would see two of me, one on each chair on either side of the room. Although he did not consciously hear my voice he reacted as I had suggested. He had his back to me but was facing the other chair and then said, 'How did you get back so quickly without my seeing you?' A few seconds later he turned and saw me where I had been sitting all the time. Then he turned to look at the other vision of me and said it was more than he could stand!

I asked him to let me have his impressions of these visual hallucinations. He says the positive ones are a little vague and rather ghost-like but they are real enough at the time. The negative ones are quite definite. The person is not seen at all.

On another occasion the subject was hypnotised and told that one minute after waking he would hear a knock at the door. On opening it he would see a certain person, whom I named and who was well known to both of us. At the correct moment he heard the knock and opened the door. He then held an imaginary conversation with the hallucinatory figure. Another person who was in the room then walked across the space where she thought the figure was supposed to be. It had the required effect. The subject



looked quite scared, and then suddenly realised it was a post-hypnotic illusion but remarked how ghastly it was to see one person walk clean through another.

#### MEMORY

I will now give you a few examples of the effects obtained by improving the subject's memory.

Under hypnosis a subject was given a number of sixteen figures and told he would remember them easily and repeat them on waking. This he did without any difficulty, so I immediately told him to repeat the number backwards. This was immediately forthcoming, also without hesitation, although there had been no suggestion under hypnosis to remember the number backwards. I have tried this effect with many subjects; some are very good but others just cannot manage it.

I was told by a friend that he had hypnotised a student and told him he would remember a chapter from a text-book which was read out to him. On waking he was supposed to have repeated the chapter word for word but had no understanding of the meaning of it. It had been learnt parrot fashion.

I did a rather similar experiment with a medical student who wished to learn a difficult subject. Under hypnosis I told him he would begin studying at a certain time and that he would have no difficulty in concentrating on his work; that he would go on studying for so many hours and that he would have a thorough understanding of the subject at the end of this period of study. The next day I was told that the result could not have been better, and some weeks later he told me that that particular night's work was still very clear in his mind and that he had a complete understanding of all he had read.

Two subjects were hypnotised at the same time and both were told to forget their own names for a few minutes. I then woke them and said to one, 'What is your name?' He thought for a few seconds and said he did not know. The other subject was quite amused until I asked him his name and he realised he could not remember his either. I then asked each if he could remember the name of the other, but neither was able to tell me. I then said to one, 'You can remember your Christian name but not your surname'. He remembered both. The same applied to the other subject.

I repeated the same experiment with a medical student, but told him he could not remember his name or anything else. I then asked him his name and he told me. I repeated the suggestion, and he promptly woke up. He said he remembered all I had said,

and as he was about to take an examination he was scared when I said he would not be able to remember anything, and that woke him up.

You will be able to see by these various experiments what results can be obtained by hypnosis, but there are certain phenomena which can be produced easily in most subjects and others which can be obtained in only a few. It has been my experience that one good subject will be excellent for one type of experiment but hopeless for another.

The next stage in the experiments will be to try and determine what it is that takes place in the subject's mind and enables his brain to have such complete control over his bodily functions. When this has been discovered, we may be much nearer understanding some of the many mysteries of the mind.

## REVIEWS

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG. By Signe Toksvig. London, Faber, 1949. 389 pp. Illus. 30s.

A book based on so much thorough and scholarly research as Miss Toksvig's life of Swedenborg should be of great interest, not only to Swedenborgians and students of psychical research, but also to a much wider range of readers. The author made personal visits to Sweden in order to examine original sources of information, and the book is filled from cover to cover with a remarkable wealth of historical and biographical detail.

Any risk that so much factual information might prove to be dry reading is completely averted by the delightful style in which the book is written. The vicissitudes of Swedenborg's life and the development of his thought, together with his deepest speculations, are discussed with a breadth of view which brings their significance vividly before the reader. By some, Swedenborg might be regarded as a dual personality because it seems queer to the ordinary view that so much efficiency in practical life should be combined with a talent for seership; but actually these incongruous interests arose from the immense range of characteristics which his personality comprised. He was a non-specialist *par excellence*: engineering, science, mathematics, anatomy, physiology, and the difficulties presented by the nature of mind all interested him. He even sought to solve the problem of the calculation of longitude before the advent of the chronometer. That he was not an



eccentric is shown by the many years of useful work he contributed to the Board of Mines. As a critic of his said: 'His was an intellect of synthesis.'

The author asks: 'From the modern point of view, did Swedenborg accomplish anything of real value to science with the *Economy* [his book, *The Economy of the Animal Kingdom*]? The answer is Yes. But the answer tarried for a couple of hundred years.' This in itself is suggestive, for it shows the extent to which Swedenborg's scientific work must have been intuitive and individual and how radically it differed from the mass-attack methods of the rank-and-file scientists of to-day. The balance and insight of Swedenborg are, indeed, brought out all through the book. It might have been thought, for example, that one so deeply interested in engineering and mechanics would, on approaching the problem of Life, have held to the mechanistic theory so popular among biologists now; but his vision led him to see below the surface. 'Life', he wrote, 'is what regards ends.'

Swedenborg had made a habit of recording his dreams, and, even during his earlier years, was interested in that which lies beyond the visible world; but it was not until the latter part of his life that he deliberately entered the province of the mystic. He was never a mystic of the orthodox type—never a man like Jacob Boehme, for instance; the very comprehensiveness of his constitution prevented it. He was always at pains to reconcile the rational mind with experiences of a transcendental kind; and thus he united tendencies which belonged to quite different levels, and which, in the case of most individuals, tend to diverge. The rationalist in him denied him the complete freedom of the spiritual empiricist; it shackled his seership and tied it to the middle plane of experience. He could not attain the genuine mystic's serenity of mind but remained beset by the doubts and uncertainties of the arena of ordinary life. The 'Great Vision', which preceded his work of re-interpreting the Bible (to him a work of the highest importance), came in a most unspiritual setting, while he was having a good dinner at a London inn.

That Swedenborg, during the later part of his life, appeared to himself to converse freely with the dead and to receive accounts of conditions in the other world, raises one of the most difficult questions of his life, and one which relates not only to the experiences of Swedenborg but to all experiences of a similar kind. To what extent are such experiences objective; to what extent are they subjective creations of the mind? The tendency of the psychical investigator, and of many others, is to dismiss them as subjective and to turn to the three reported cases of 'clairvoyance'—his knowledge of a fire at Stockholm when he was absent from

the city, his declaration of the hiding-place of a certain receipt, and his knowledge of the contents of a secret letter written by the Queen of Sweden. These cases seem to rest on fairly good evidence ; but evidence for such cases never turns out to be more than relative because the value assigned to it depends on the pre-suppositions of the judge, and these vary from one individual to another. This is the perennial difficulty of psychological research but behind it lies a more subtle difficulty. Are we sure that the criterion we bring to the assessment of evidence of the Swedenborgian kind legitimately applies to it? We assume the existence of a sharp line dividing the subjective from the objective, so that Swedenborg's, or anyone else's, experiences *must* lie completely in one category or the other. The spirits with whom he believed he was in communication *must* have been either completely independent of him or else completely his own creation. This is the assumption we bring with us and treat as axiomatic. But it has been acquired from sense-experience of the external world ; and we tacitly assume that, because it applies to this, it must apply universally. Even our bodily experiences, if we examine them closely, show a gradation of objectivity in that which they convey. This is a fact of experience : yet to our minds it seems nonsense to say that a thing can be *rather* objective. But does it seem nonsense because it *is* nonsense, or because nature presents things possessing characteristics for which our minds have no mental counterparts? This is a fundamental issue which enters into all criticism of mystical experience and also of the lower-grade experiences of Swedenborg. Is it that we are looking at these things through tinted glasses supplied by a mind which nature has constructed to deal with a special world? If so, may it not be our first duty to enlarge our category of ideas rather than to force the phenomena into the inadequate framework of the concepts we already have? Should we not, in other words, examine ourselves at the same time that we examine the phenomena?

A story is told of a guide who was showing a party of visitors round a picture-gallery abroad. Having shown them a very famous picture, he said : ' Well, ladies and gentlemen, what do you think of it? ' And then he added : ' Be careful what you say, for it is not the picture that is on trial but *you!* ' May not this be our case when we are examining paranormal and spiritual things? Is it not possible that in expressing our judgment we are doing little more than exhibit our mental idiosyncrasies? Possibly Swedenborg, in what we tend to call his subjective experiences, was in touch with something relatively independent of himself though not independent in the extreme sense in which matter is independent of the perceiving mind. If this is so, a dilemma faces us. On the one



and we can strive to form new conceptions of what objectivity and subjectivity mean so as to render them adequate to the experiences we are dealing with ; or, on the other hand, we may continue to force these experiences into the framework of the cut-and-dried concepts we already have. But it is the irony of fate that if we take the latter course we make the solution of the problem unreal and ourselves force subjectivity into it.

The author of this book is greatly to be congratulated on having written the life of this remarkable man with so much thoroughness, comprehension, and literary skill ; and it is to be hoped that readers of many schools of thought, and particularly those whose minds are permeated by the modern outlook, will profit by the perusal of it.

G. N. M. TYRRELL

GEORGE FOX'S ' BOOK OF MIRACLES '. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry J. Cadbury. Cambridge University Press, 1948. xvi, 162 pp. Illus. 21s.

Among psychical researchers interest in spiritual healing has for long been current. The attempts to disentangle the various elements in the process, and thereby to isolate those factors which seemed clearly beyond the normal processes of nature, was well within the scope of psychical research, just as was the study of the stigmata and similar phenomena. Work, however, was rendered difficult and disheartening, owing not so much to the complexity of the problem as to the obstruction put up by the healers and their followers to any rigorous scientific examination. It is true that there were some notable exceptions, but it is clear that the same general situation was found to exist by at least two of the mixed committees set up to examine the question. Over a quarter of a century ago the body sitting in accordance with Resolution 63 of the 1920 Lambeth Conference had come to pretty much the same conclusions as those of the clerical and medical committee ten years before. Evidence of healing which could not be paralleled by ordinary psychotherapy and spontaneous healing was not found. Stories there were, and plenty of them, but evidence, as the scientific man understands that term, was lacking. It seemed impossible to come to grips with cases which could be investigated from the primary diagnosis to the final cure.

With the activities of so many healers among us to-day, the appearance of this admirable book is especially interesting. It had for long been known that the Quaker healer, George Fox (1624-1691), had compiled a ' Book of Miracles ', in which were recorded accounts of his own cases of healing, but the work had

disappeared, and we owe it to the devoted labours of Dr George Cadbury that a partial reconstruction has been accomplished, based upon the notes in the index to the Annual Catalogue of George Fox's Papers which was made in 1694-1698. The result is a fascinating story of George Fox and his work, for not only has Dr Cadbury reconstructed some of the lost material, but he has added to what is extant by supplementing what he has dug out of the index with extracts from other sources, and by adding a useful summary of the whole situation regarding spiritual healing as viewed by the Quakers in relation to their own miracles.

In Fox's record nothing of the spectacular will be found. Just as in the case of the 1924 committee, so here there appears little evidence of cases of healing of organic disease. But in the other cases it is clear that success was achieved and the patient relieved and possibly cured. Naturally, as among theologians generally, the Quakers were inclined to believe that the source of the curative power lay *outside* the patient, and that that source was not of this world, while medical and scientific witnesses were in favour of regarding the activity as *within* the sufferer, although put into motion by external stimuli of a non-spiritual nature.

For those who want a clear statement of the condition of spiritual healing in the seventeenth century this book could hardly be improved. Admirably arranged, printed, and illustrated, the volume is a credit both to Dr Cadbury himself and to the distinguished publishing house which sponsored and produced it.

E. J. DINGWALL

UNBIDDEN GUESTS. By William Oliver Stevens. London, Allen & Unwin, 1949. xvi, 322 pp. 12s. 6d.

Mr Stevens, a leading member of the American S.P.R., has brought together within the compass of a book which he describes as 'a book of real ghosts', a large number of cases, old and new which illustrate well the extraordinary variety of supposed psychical phenomena and the persistence of popular belief regarding them. With many of the cases our members will already be familiar, but there are others, well worth study, that we are glad to have brought to our notice.

In his Introduction Mr Stevens rightly emphasises the need for evidence that will stand up to criticism, and in the chapter headed 'Conclusion' he points out how modern evidential standards have demolished some time-honoured traditions, as that ghosts have a particular attachment to churchyards or to places where a crime has been committed.

'Since the best work in psychic research has been done in



England, it is not surprising that the best-attested cases have an English setting' (Introduction, p. xii). After such a handsome compliment to English psychical research, it may appear ungracious for an English reviewer to suggest laxity in the author's own evidential standards. To be as little invidious as possible, I will point to two English cases quoted by him: they are neither of them cases for which our Society has any responsibility. Both are experiences occurring out-of-doors, a type of experience in which, as is generally recognised, a frequent source of error is mistaking ordinary persons and things for 'phantoms'.

The first is the Borley 'Nun', said to have been seen by four ladies at the same time in 'bright daylight'. The experience occurred on the evening of 28 July 1900; how late in the evening? The amount of light is, of course, crucial. No contemporary written account seems to have been made: at least Harry Price, who is Mr Stevens's authority, mentions none. No first-hand account by any of the percipients is given us. All we have is a report by Harry Price of an interview with the ladies in 1929.

Then Mr Stevens quotes *An Adventure*, which may reckon as an English case, since the narrators were English, though the *locus in quo* was French. Strictly contemporary record is here essential, owing to the close resemblance between what the authors thought they had seen supernormally, and what, in the opinion of persons more conversant with the French scene than themselves, any person who visited the Petit Trianon on the same day but in a normal state would have seen: see M. Sage's remarks quoted in the Society's *Proceedings* XXV, 354 f. On p. 118 Mr Stevens says: 'Before any investigation began . . . independent narratives of that August afternoon at the Petit Trianon, written by the two women, were sent to the Society for Psychical Research'. The August in question was 1901. The only narratives printed in the first edition (1911), and in most later editions, while they bear the date 'November 1901', are taken from copies made in 1906 of documents of uncertain date, the originals of which no longer exist. By 1906 there had been much consultation between the authors, whose investigations were well advanced. At what date were the originals of these documents first seen by anyone except the authors? No copy was seen by any S.P.R. officer till several years later. Of earlier versions, which *were* drawn up in November 1901, long enough after the experience in all conscience, originals exist: they differ considerably in material particulars from the later versions on which Mr Stevens seems to rely.

While English cases are under discussion a small point of interest may be raised. Mr Stevens places the scene of the famous Morton haunt (reported in *Proceedings*, VIII) at Bognor, whereas

Mr Abdy Collins has recently given reasons for placing it at Cheltenham.

Mr Stevens invites the reader to form his own judgment as to whether ghosts have objective reality : it would be interesting to have his definition of objective and subjective as applied to psychic phenomena. Many of his observations in the chapter *Conclusions* should be carefully weighed, and he cites several cases that are better attested than the two criticised above. A better view of the problem he raises might perhaps have been obtained if, within the limits of well-attested cases, he had given us for comparison a series of psychic experiences of various kinds, showing us where the line between objective and subjective should be drawn.

W. H. S.

HAUNTED BORLEY. By the Rev. A. C. Henning. [1949]. 56 pp. Illus. 4s. 6d.

Mr Henning, rector of Borley-cum-Liston since 1936, has written a booklet which combines an account of some of the phenomena associated with Borley Rectory and a history of the parish and church. Recent alleged phenomena described by Mr Henning include footsteps, mysterious organ music, and the smell of incense. Mr Henning leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader that he is convinced of their paranormal nature. *Haunted Borley* is published by the author from The Rectory, Liston, Nr Sudbury, Suffolk.

THE JOURNAL OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY, Vol. XIII, No. 2, June 1949. Durham, N.C., Duke University Press. \$1.25.

Professor Rhine points out in an editorial that the factor now limiting research in parapsychology is lack of funds. This is a situation with which we are even more familiar in this country.

The main article is a shortened form of Dr Soal's Myers Memorial Lecture which has been published in full by our own Society.

An article by C. G. Abbot reports an E.S.P. experiment with himself as subject in which he obtains a displacement effect similar to that found by Whately Carington and Soal.

D. D. Webster reports the construction of a machine for automatic testing and recording in E.S.P. experiments. Apparently the author feels that rigorous proof of E.S.P. can only be given by the use of a machine. A later article with W. T. Heron reports the use of the machine in an experiment in which only chance results were obtained. Since, however, only 206 runs were given (dis-

tributed among 50 subjects), it is difficult to draw any conclusion from this result. It would have been interesting to have tested subjects already shown to be able to succeed in tests administered in the ordinary way, since there appears to be some evidence that the use of machine presentation is unfavourable to E.S.P. success. It would also be better if the experimenters in future experiments did not use the same arrangement of symbols more than once.

J. H. Rush and Ann Jensen report highly significant positive results in E.S.P. tests on the reproduction of drawings over distances of from 200 to 500 miles. Both participants had previously failed to score on laboratory card tests.

There is a review by A. P. H. Trivelli of *War Predictions* by Dr W. H. C. Tenhaeff.

A letter by Dr Greville elucidates a point in connection with the Pratt-Birge method of appraising verbal material. In a footnote to a letter from the present reviewer, the Editor agrees that the symbol *P* shall be used in the *Journal* in the English sense of the likelihood of a deviation of the observed size having occurred by chance in either direction, and not for the likelihood of it occurring in the observed direction.

R. H. THOULESS

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH,  
Vol. XLIII, No. 3, July 1949.

Gardner Murphy recalls William James's pioneer work in psychical research, in particular his investigation of Mrs Piper. Sarah Parker White gives an account of experiments lasting five years in which veridical messages were received through a medium. The 'communicator' was Elwood Worcester, theologian and philosopher, President of the Boston Society for Psychic Research from its foundation in 1925 until shortly before his death in 1940.

Gertrude Schmeidler, whose comparisons of the performance of 'sheep' and 'goats' in E.S.P. work are now well known, reports an examination of some of her data by an independent Rorschach worker, with results in accord with previous findings. Well-adjusted sheep scored above chance (although other sheep did not), and well-adjusted goats scored substantially below chance.

Ronald Rose writes a long and unfavourable review of Dr Jan Ehrenwald's book *Telepathy and Medical Psychology* (reviewed in the S.P.R. *Journal* for March 1948), in which he concludes: 'There is little satisfactory evidence to support Dr Ehrenwald's concept of the relationship of telepathy to abnormal psychological states. His entire case is constructed on shaky foundations of



fact, fiction, and fantasy'. He also accuses Ehrenwald of faulty documentation and carelessness in quotation, giving chapter and verse. Dr Ehrenwald has been invited to reply in the next number of the American Society's *Journal*.

D. P.

## THE PIDDINGTONS<sup>1</sup>

THE following letter was published in *The Times* of 15 September 1949:

Sir,—Audiences running into millions have been entertained by a series of 'thought-transference' performances recently broadcast by the B.B.C. These were presented in such a way as to imply that genuine telepathic powers were employed, and the producer of the programme has publicly stated that he is convinced that this was so.<sup>2</sup> We need hardly stress the importance of a thorough and impartial exploration of any human faculty for the existence of which there is a substantial body of evidence. The faculty known as telepathy has for over 70 years been the subject of scientific investigation, and lately of experiment under laboratory conditions. Much interest in this research has been aroused in scientific circles, and several leading scientists accept the faculty as proved. It would be most regrettable if any confusion were created in the public mind between serious researches of this kind and the performances which the B.B.C. has been broadcasting. Many notable 'thought-transference' acts have been investigated in the past without producing evidence of the employment of any supernormal faculty or of any phenomena that a competent illusionist could not reproduce under identical conditions. The only feature which appears to distinguish the B.B.C. performances from previous 'thought-transference' acts was their adaptation to the requirements of broadcasting.

Yours faithfully,

C. D. BROAD, GILBERT MURRAY, W. H. SALTER.

Society for Psychical Research,  
31 Tavistock Square, W.C. 1.

The B.B.C.'s reply, which appeared in *The Times* of 20 September, was as follows:

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 83-5 of the July-August issue of this *Journal*.

<sup>2</sup> In an article in the *Radio Times* of 19 August, Mr Piffard's views are summarised in the following extract from it: 'I won't attempt to prove the genuineness of the Piddingtons' telepathy; I will just say it is genuine. Having produced five programmes, knowing every detail and every precaution taken, I can say quite truthfully that there never has been a single instance of fake thought transference by Sidney Piddington or his wife.'

Sir,—It is clear from the Society for Psychical Research's letter in *The Times* of September 15, and other letters, that some of the public have been misled as to the nature of the recent broadcasts by the Piddingtons. This may have been due to some extent to the presentation of the programme ; more so perhaps to a signed article in the *Radio Times* in which the producer of the series stated his personal conviction that the performance involved telepathy. From the very beginning these broadcasts were meant by the B.B.C. to be regarded purely as entertainment, and the programme announcement in the *Radio Times* specifically stated that ' Sidney Piddington and his wife Lesley Pope entertain you in their own kind of mystery '. That they should be regarded as a serious contribution to scientific knowledge was never our intention. However, the fact remains that some doubts have arisen, and the B.B.C. regrets very much that an entertainment programme which has given pleasure to millions should have, even by inadvertence, been capable of being misunderstood.

Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL STANDING,

*Head of Variety, British Broadcasting Corporation.*

Aeolian Hall, New Bond Street, W. 1.

It is clear, not only from correspondence in other organs of the press but also from letters which have been received by the Society, that there still persists a misconception as to the conditions in which the Piddingtons' performances were given. It may, therefore, be useful to quote from the account written by one who acted as a ' judge ' at one of these performances, Mr Kingsley Martin, editor of the *New Statesman*. Mr Kingsley Martin has kindly given permission for the following extracts to be reproduced from the article by him in the issue of the *New Statesman* for 3 September :

I readily agreed when the B.B.C. rang up and asked me to be a ' judge ' at one of the Piddington shows. I had, and have, no views one way or another about the existence of telepathy ; I only know that there are people whose word I respect who declare in its favour. I believed that the B.B.C. was offering a serious opportunity of investigating a fascinating problem.

In the studio it was at once clear that nothing of the sort was being attempted. The programme was treated as pure entertainment. Every second of the time was precisely mapped out ; no opportunity was given to test or challenge anything. How far from scientific the conditions were I can, perhaps, best illustrate by saying that my only fellow judge was Major Dautry, who had introduced the Piddingtons at their first show. He was an old friend who had been, he told me, with Mr Piddington in a Japanese P.O.W. camp. He had also been with the Piddingtons when their performance was televised. It was Major Dautry, and not I, who pointed to the tunes on the blackboard

which the blindfolded Lesley Piddington guessed, and in the last item on the programme it was he who was with Piddington when the cards were seen and 'transmitted' to Lesley. I emphasise that neither I nor anyone else except Mr Piddington and Major Dautry had had the opportunity of seeing the cards, and I had no chance of checking whether the ones I took from the pack were actually the ones 'transmitted'.

Nor was this all. From the very beginning the show was devised as entertainment; the atmosphere was 'friendly' and informal to the last degree. It was announced, for instance, that I and some other unnamed members of the audience would go with Mr Piddington into a sound-proof studio where we would pick out a portrait of a film-star, a Rhine card and the name of a tune. The first two choices were announced from the studio to the outside public and correctly identified by Lesley. The third (which, if I remember rightly, was the tune) was picked, but not announced. How could there be any code by which Lesley could guess something which had never been even uttered and which had been picked in a different room? This was a very impressive test to the outside public. It was less impressive to me because I did not pick it myself. It was picked by one of the unnamed members of the audience who came to the studio with me. I ascertained, as we went into the studio, that at least one, and I think more than one, of these members of the audience had also been in the prison camp with Piddington. One of them told me so . . .

For myself I have not the slightest objection to acting the fool in a piece of excellent foolery. If it had been understood that the Piddingtons were only entertainers I should have enjoyed coming on to their platform, just as I should enjoy having a conjurer pull ribbons out of my mouth or eggs from behind my ears. But I think it's a bit thick to use an outsider as a stooge in an entertainment which the listening public regards as scientific. . . .

Telepathy is an extremely interesting and controversial subject in which serious inquiries under controlled conditions have been made and are being made. The B.B.C. might have aided these experiments. In my opinion it will be difficult for the B.B.C. again to persuade thoughtful people that it is really 'investigating' telepathy or any other subject. Who is going to take its claims seriously? If the B.B.C. is prepared to fool the public for the public's amusement then it puts itself in the same category as the music hall. If this is so, well and good, but I do not think that this is the category in which it wishes to be placed.

In such circumstances nothing more than conjuring skill is required to produce the effects achieved. The conditions would not for one moment be accepted for E.S.P. experiments by anyone trained in the methods of psychical research.

The *New Statesman* for 24 September contained a reply from Mr Piddington. While continuing to refrain from making any



direct claim to telepathic powers, he sought to show that adequate opportunities were given for the 'judge' to satisfy himself as to the adequacy of the conditions. In a comment printed in the same issue, Mr Kingsley Martin effectively showed that in the circumstances of the performance he 'was not any kind of a judge, but just a participant in a jolly good show'.

Finally, we reproduce below a letter which was printed in the *Radio Times* of 2 September.

On behalf of the Occult Committee of the Magic Circle, may I be permitted to say that the paragraphs by Frederick Piffard on the Piddingtons in your issue of August 19 seem to be gravely misleading in their implications? Mr Piffard is clearly entitled to his own opinions but, as the producer of the show, his words would carry greater weight with your readers than those of other persons, however prominent.

The normal methods used by the Piddingtons in producing their 'telepathic' effects are perfectly well known to magicians and expert psychical researchers, however mysterious and inexplicable they may seem to untrained observers, and it is noteworthy that the Piddingtons themselves very properly lay no claims to the possession of any so-called 'supernormal' powers. Their show is a mystery entertainment of excellent quality, and it is merely naïve to credit them with anything but a keen sense of good showmanship and an appreciation of how to use subtle methods of simulating telepathy over the radio.

J. A. ESLER,

*Hon Sec., Occult Committee, The Magic Circle.*

This is by no means the first time that a stage 'thought-transference' act has led the public to believe in the performers' possession of paranormal powers. No doubt it is not the last—though it is to be hoped that the B.B.C. will not again be similarly involved. The discussions which this particular act have aroused have been dealt with at some length, as it may be useful to have them on record should a like situation arise at some future date.

E. O.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### A NEW DESIGN FOR A P.K. EXPERIMENT

SIR,—I am stimulated by the Research Officer's Notes in the March-April issue of the *Journal* and by Mr Parsons's comment on the lack of private research to put forward a new design for a P.K. experiment.

The apparatus consists of (1) a rigidly supported pendulum about 70 cm. in length (the 'P.K. pendulum') and (2) the 'impulse-regulator' which can either be a metronome—this is preferable—or a second pendulum identical with the first and mounted independently.

The metronome is adjusted to the natural frequency of the 'P.K. pendulum' and is set in motion. (Alternatively, the second pendulum is set swinging in vibrations of small amplitude). The 'P.K. pendulum' (preferably enclosed in a glass case to eliminate air-currents) is stationary, and may be visible or invisible to the subject, who has the 'impulse-regulator' in full view. The subject endeavours to impart psychokinetic impulses in the obvious direction to the 'P.K. pendulum' as the 'impulse-regulator' passes the zero position on each swing.

This experiment seems to me simple and flexible, e.g. it could be performed with slight modification by one person or by a hall-full of people or by a radio audience.

A number of variations in technique and some theoretical points have occurred to me, but there is only space to emphasise two here :

1. The chief experimental danger is induced resonance, and to prevent it the 'impulse-regulator' and 'P.K. pendulum' must be independently supported—at least on different tables.

2. Since (within the limit of definiteness of the 'regulator') vibration of the pendulum would be sympathetic (resonant), any P.K. impulse, however small, *if it can be repeatedly applied*, will give a positive result to the experiment.

Yours etc.,

MICHAEL SCRIVEN,

*Hon. Sec., Melbourne University Society for Psychical Research.*

## OBITUARY

### PROFESSOR T. K. OESTERREICH

WE have learnt with the greatest regret of the recent death of Professor T. K. Oesterreich of Tübingen University. Professor Oesterreich first became known to psychical researchers by the publication in 1921 of *Die Bessessenheit*, in which he discussed the nature of possession and related its spontaneous and induced occurrence among both civilised and uncivilised peoples to psychical research. In the same year he published *Der Okkultismus in Modernen Weltbild*, the second edition of which was translated into English under the title *Occultism and Modern Science* and published in 1928. In this he came to closer grips with contem-

porary psychical research, commenting in a cautiously critical spirit on the phenomena of Mrs Piper, Eva C., and other mediums.

He retained his keen interest in psychical research until his death. The Nazis on coming to power deprived him of his professorship, to which he was restored after the war. He had been a Corresponding Member of the Society since 1924, and his confirmation in that position after the war gave him great pleasure. But the sufferings he had undergone had sapped his health and after two years serious illness he died.



